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## Florence site center of EPA protest

By **BRIAN SCHEID**

Burlington County Times

FLORENCE - A delegation of local, state and federal officials gathered near the former Roebling Steel plant yesterday morning and blasted the Bush administration for delaying the cleanups of hundreds of similar Superfund sites across the country.

The news conference came on the heels of a decision by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to delay the cleanup effort at the Roebling site on the hope that more funding will become available later this fiscal year.

U.S. Sen. Jon Corzine, D-N.J., said the EPA was putting Florence's economic health at risk, since no developer would consider the site for redevelopment now that the cleanup had been delayed.

In a statement released by her office yesterday afternoon, EPA Regional Administrator Jane Kenny said the EPA "has every intention of obligating sufficient funds to continue the work" at the Roebling site this fall.

"This is the second time in a month that we have made that commitment clear," Kenny said. "Unfortunately, officials in New Jersey, despite their understanding of the Superfund funding process, persist in their claims that we will not fund the Roebling cleanup. As we have stated before, that is not the case."

State Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bradley Campbell said Kenny's assurances would not be enough to attract developers to the site.

Florence Mayor Michael Muchowski said without consistency in funding from the EPA, the township would be forever stalled in talks with potential developers.

Muchowski said he feared the EPA's decision to delay the cleanup was based on a decision by International Developers to abandon its plans earlier this year to build a \$90 million golf course, hotel-conference center and marina on the site.

"The potential for this site is beyond description," said Joan Geary, chairwoman of the township's Economic Development Council. "But we

desperately need this funding."

According to a report re-leased yesterday by the New Jersey Public Interest Research Group, 15 Superfund sites in New Jersey, including Roebling, received only partial funding for their cleanup efforts this year. The report also said that 78 Superfund cleanups across the state could be slowed down or stopped due to a lack of federal funding.

"What we have is a Super-fund that is no longer super," said Doug O'Malley, NJPIRG's campaign director.

O'Malley said the Bush administration cleaned up 42 Superfund sites last year and expects to clean up 40 this year. During the Clinton administration, the EPA cleaned up an average of 87 sites per year, according to the report.

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